

Snake Charmers Haven't Had Trouble Till They've Met Fringed Tapeworm

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MERTZON — The Shortgrass Country has never been guilty of fostering an international crisis. Even back during the Indian Wars, we were practically neutral. Neither the redmen nor the pioneers could build up much ambition to fight over a dreary expanse of unfenced desert.

Smart-alec historians claim that both sides were doing their best in these fracas, but the scholars have yet to explain why the old battlegrounds don't yield more split rifle stocks and broken war clubs. The truth is, our founding fathers and the native Indians pulled off the slickest mock conquest of all time. A half-blind member of the professional wrestling association could have seen through their ruse.

Until a month ago, it looked as if our reputation for non-intervention would last forever. I believe it would have if the registered sheep raisers association hadn't struck a trade to airlift 1460 head of ewes and rams to India. But after the registered people became implicated in leading one of the largest countries in the world into a precarious economic path, we might as well endorse the troublesome policies of Charles DeGaulle.

No longer could we be considered harmless herders of sheep and cattle. The die was cast. We were as guilty of instigating the international strife as the war mongering munitions manufacturers once were in Germany.

One of my compadres was able to work in on the deal. For the past two weeks he's taken over the session around the coffee houses, blabbing about his bucks getting an airplane ride overseas. This has left the rest of us without much to say. Shipping a bobtail load of broken mouth ewes to San Angelo isn't much of a news item after one of your sidekicks has contracted to ship some papered woollies all the way to New Delhi on a big airplane.

But this bigshot exporter is going to feel different, once he realizes how much suffering his greediness has caused. He's going to be mighty ashamed when he hears that one of those high Indian princes has jumped off his castle because he had to mortgage his sacred cattle to buy sheep feed and worm medicine. The glory of taking part in the export trade won't sound so smart as reports come in of Indian female royalty sorrowing because their favorite daughters ran off with commission men or fell in love with sheepherders.

Oh yes, it's a big money making scheme now, cashing sheep in for rupees. But how are my compadre's children going to feel upon learning that their own father was partly responsible for changing the happy-go-lucky starving masses of India into miserable, sheep-owning paupers? Imagine the shame his heirs will suffer as they realize their sire had a part in causing snake charmers to have to work overtime to pay their shearing expense, blowing their flutes until they develop varicose lips, while their reptiles become so jaded they can't wiggle through a slow waltz. His descendants will be the ones to suffer; society doesn't quickly forget a man who corrupts the economy of an entire nation.

Before registered sheepmen began picking on India, that country already had enough problems to give a big chapter of the Women's Missionary Society a nervous collapse. The citizens there were already wearing turbans as ragged as a second hand circus tent. Without having to worry about the sheep business, the poor souls were worn to a frazzle from listening to lectures on the world's population explosion, and how unhandy and unsanitary it was to be poor.

For the last 30 years, the Indian peasants have hardly been able to get their oxen to stand still for harnessing unless there was a news camera grinding in the background. They have had less hope of privacy than a president's widow. The only break they've had was missing out on the Kinsey polls.

However, that's the way this old world is run today. African natives are forced out of their jungle huts to toil toward progress; Eskimos are choused from their igloos to hear lectures on how to work and worry during their long winters.

It's a shameful thing that some of my own people are aiding and abetting the rabble rousers. But I guess we'll have another drouth one of these days, and then the registered herders here will have enough on their minds to leave the rest of the world alone.